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Rep. Jacques Hails Assembly Passage of Key Initiatives in Budget

(Madison, WI) On behalf of his constituents, State Rep. André Jacques applauded the passage earlier today of the 2017-'19 biennial budget, highlighting in particular several of the provisions added at his request to assist local economic development; fight waste, fraud and abuse within state programs; reduce barriers to full employment; cut taxes; reform transportation and protect the vulnerable and the environment:

Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Restoration

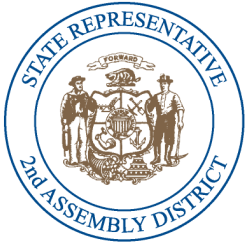
"Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits have proven to be one of, if not the single most effective dollar for dollar economic development tools for local government. I was honored to propose this program two sessions ago and it has been an overwhelming success since its implementation. The revised budget bill made a number of changes to sustain this vital program, and I am grateful for the enthusiastic support from across the state throughout the budget process in making it happen."

Eliminating Waste, Fraud and Abuse

"In addition to increasing funding for local government fraud investigation and prevention efforts, I was extremely pleased that the Finance Committee and Assembly adopted my proposed motion directing the Department of Health Services Office of Inspector General (DHS OIG) to expand upon their recent audit which revealed widespread fraud by and overpayments to Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin and other providers. OIG has previously uncovered that almost half of Planned Parenthood's audited reimbursements were improper and should be returned to taxpayers. My proposal will uncover the full extent of fraud that has occurred and redistribute those funds to DHS fraud and error investigation and reduction efforts, public health aids, and treatment services for child victims of sex trafficking. The budget also includes my motion to cut down on fraud within Wisconsin's Foodshare Program by expunging unused benefits after one year to prevent banking large account balances and a temptation to fraud in what is intended to be a needs-based program."

Reforming MAPP to Assist Individuals with Disabilities

"For over three years I have been working with Options for Independent Living and members of a broad coalition of disability rights organizations to promote changes to the Medical Assistance Purchase Plan (MAPP). MAPP is a work incentive program available to people with disabilities who want to work, but fear losing the health care services they need. The Governor's biennial budget incorporated, and the Finance Committee sustained, many of the reforms I had previously proposed to the MAPP program to ensure it functions as a work incentive program, enabling people with disabilities to pursue jobs and careers without jeopardizing access to health and long term care they need to work. These significant and essential changes will remove barriers to full workforce participation for the disabled and ensure that the MAPP program becomes an even more valuable and viable tool in our efforts to improve employment outcomes by fixing the premium "cliff" currently preventing users from being able to take on additional or higher paying work opportunities, removing the penalties presently placed on MAPP program participants for savings in retirement or independence accounts, expanding eligibility to allow more disabled individuals to participate in the program and improve the safety net for medically needy individuals, and strengthening MAPP work requirements and increase program sustainability



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through mandatory minimum premiums. I am extremely pleased with these critical, common sense changes which support long term employment, make economic sense, and bolster our workforce by providing access to the healthcare individuals with disabilities need in order to work."

Prevailing Wage Repeal for State Projects and Transportation Reforms

"I am proud to have passed legislation through my committee last session as Assembly Labor Committee Chair which would have fully repealed prevailing wage mandates for both state and local projects. I am excited that this budget completes that effort by eliminating the state prevailing wage and builds on the substantial savings achieved by local governments throughout our state since those additional costs were removed at that level in the previous budget. I applaud the reduction in bonding accomplished in this budget while simultaneously increasing local road funding. I am also appreciative of several other efforts to increase efficiency within WisDOT, including the "funding swaps" provision and instituting an Office of Inspector General within DOT to enforce audit recommendations and root out waste."

Eliminating the State Portion of the Property Tax and Phased Elimination of the Personal Property Tax

"When we have the opportunity to eliminate a tax or fee that bears no real relation to any service being provided or a rational reason for those who it is imposed upon, we need to jump at the chance to do so, particularly when it is very unlikely to be recreated in the future. I am thrilled that we have once again held the line on the property tax burden felt by Wisconsin residents and reduced both paperwork and taxes for small businesses throughout our state."

Removing Barriers to State Licensure for Skilled Plumbers Moving to Wisconsin

"I am pleased that the full Assembly has now passed a motion I authored requiring the Department of Safety and Professional Services to also allow experienced plumbers to take the Wisconsin journeyman plumber examination and obtain a license upon successful passage. Under the change, individuals must have completed a plumbing apprenticeship in another state and maintained a license in another state as a journeyman plumber for at least five years without any disciplinary action taken against them."

Other Provisions

"I was pleased to submit or support successful motions incorporated into the budget to increase civil legal aid for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, provide additional resources for law enforcement and public safety, remove a WisDOT barrier to allow for the Town of Lawrence (discriminated against because it is a town, not incorporated as a city or village) to place road signs supporting economic development, require a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study of eastern Wisconsin watersheds (including portions of Manitowoc and Brown Counties) to better assess sources of contamination, and reduce the burden of adoption expenses.

There remains much work to do legislatively yet this session and beyond. There were opportunities for further improvement missed and other areas in the budget where I thought we went the wrong direction. That being said, I am very happy with the success of my efforts and our collective progress made in this budget, and I am proud to cast my vote for it."

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